

LEAVING A LEGACY LIKE LILLIAN

Psalm 78: 1-8 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

(A Sermon in Memory of Lillian McMartin – 01/27/35 to 10/16/21)

Remembering Lillian is not hard to do. She went Home to Jesus at age 85 years young. She was a part of our small group, and Lillian even had a chair in our living room that we dubbed, “Lillian’s Chair.” If someone sat there before Lillian arrived, we let them know the chair they chose was taken. In no way, is this message intended to be another eulogy for Lillian, for those words were given beautifully by Pastor Will Cornell on October 22, 2021, at Rest Haven Memorial Gardens.

Nevertheless, Lillian’s Christian life and testimony live on today as she is Home with Jesus and part of that innumerable “great cloud of witnesses.” Today, we are joining together outside the church for Lillian McMartin’s Memorial Barbecue. John McMartin, Lillian’s son who has a barbecue business in Worland has come down to barbecue beef brisket, pulled pork, and smoked chicken. This will be a meal in loving memory of this saint of God whom the Lord took to His arms last year. Her blessed and fervent testimony for Jesus is why today, God has called me to share from His Word how we too can leave a Christian legacy behind us like Lillian did. Steve Green’s song often comes to my mind and it reminds me of Lillian’s life filled with tender love and a gentle boldness in speaking of her Jesus. The words of that song, “Find Us Faithful” are:

“We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road, and those who've gone before us Line the way. Cheering on the faithful, Encouraging the weary, Their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace. (Chorus) O may all who come behind us find us faithful, May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe, and the lives we live inspire them to obey. O may all who come behind us find us faithful. Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run the race, not only for the prize, but as those who've gone before us, let us leave to those behind us, the heritage of faithfulness passed on thru godly lives. After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone, and our children sift thru all we've left behind, May the clues that they discover, and the memories they uncover, Become the light that leads them, To the road we each must find. (Chorus) Let’s discover now how Asaph, the psalmist of Psalm 78 laid out the way for us to leave a godly legacy to children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. I see three ways God is asking us to pass on our godly legacy.

FATHERS AND MOTHERS, LOOK BACK, LISTEN, AND LEARN SO WE WILL PASS ON A GOOD AND GODLY LEGACY TO OUR CHILDREN.

(I.) We read in Psalm 78: 1-4. “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He

has done.” It is God’s will that the lessons learned in the past from the Lord are to be taught and declared to our children, our family, and our church family continuously. God wants continuity from generation to generation—that no lapse occurs, but that until Jesus returns, there is a smooth and strong handoff of our godly legacy, and the work God has done in our lives passed on to each of our succeeding generations. This means that our task of teaching the commandments of the Lord, and to recount His miracles never ends until we are called Home like Lillian to Jesus’ arms—our job is in perpetuity, our task lasts until we go Home to Jesus. You will notice in verse 3 that God especially holds fathers as most responsible to pass on this legacy. Our woke world has often relegated fathers into a second-class citizen role. I just read a well-known feminist leader who said, “Fathers are a biological necessity, but a psychological absurdity.” That is truly an opinion that runs diametrically in opposition to God’s Word. Dads have a vital role in bringing strength and stability to every home. God designed that dads and moms working as a couple as parents bring the necessary ingredients into the home that are crucial to the spiritual and emotional stability of every home. God’s design of femininity and masculinity reveal to children a picture of the very image of God. These two influences working together in the home, are the heart of a godly legacy, and what dads and moms together in the home pass on to their children is at the heart of what God uses to shape spiritually and psychologically healthy children. But be aware, the enemy, Satan is out to destroy our Christian legacy by breaking up our homes and marriages.

When fathers and mothers working together are split apart, the results on the family and children are devastating beyond belief. Since prayer was taken out of the public classroom on October 19, 1962, until today in 2022, violent crime has increased over 500%. Illegitimate births have increased 400%. Divorces have increased 400%. Children living in single parent homes has increased 300%. Teenage suicide has increased 200%. The family is under attack, and millions of families are broken. This year’s statistics say 36.6% of all US marriages end in divorce. Roughly, one in two children will see their parent’s marriage break up. 21% of all children in America are being raised without a father. The greatest behavioral issues of children happen when divorce happens between children’s ages 7-14, and children with divorced parents are twice as likely to end up dropping out of school. 70% of all US incarcerated inmates who are long term, grew up in a broken home, with parents divorced.

Thank the Lord, God is helping single dads and moms where one or the other parent has separated and divorced. Nothing is too hard for the Lord! But if we listen to Asaph’s words, he speaks of sharing dark sayings, which doubtless include how God helped men and women of God who reached out to Him for help. What a legacy to pass on—that “we almost divorced,” but God got through to our hardened hearts and He gave us a brand-new marriage, raising our old broken marriage from the dead. Asaph speaks of things we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. Then Asaph says in verse 4, “We will not hide them from our children, but tell, to the coming generation.” Not all our stories to tell our children

are immediate success stories. But oh, the joy of telling our children, “For a time, our marriage was on the rocks, but God miraculously rescued us,” or “For a time, your daddy or your mommy was suicidal, but God somehow preserved our life.” Beloved, our past holds lessons for the present. George Santayana well said it, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” William Wordsworth wrote, “The child is the father of the man,” meaning the experiences which occur in our early and formative years of our lives, some before marriage or later after we are married, the experiences of home life shape the character and behavior of each of us.

So often I hear parents say, “My wife and I agreed we didn’t want any religious conviction forced on our children. We raised our children to be neutral.” There can be no religious neutrality in our homes because neutrality about God is the essence of hating God. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” When we pass on the truth of how God took us over, from darkness to light, telling our legacy will help our children, teens, and adults in every generation to come. I love the old spiritual written by C. H. Cobbs in 1936. This legacy song says it well. “Lord, I’ve been rebuked, and I’ve been scorned, And I’ve been talked about, sure as you’re born, and my soul looked back and wondered, wondered, How I got over, my Lord. As soon as I see Jesus, the Lord who died for me, The One who bled and suffered, as He hung on Calvary, I’m gonna’ thank Him for how He brought me, thank Him for how He taught me, thank my God for how He kept me, thank Him ‘cause He never left me. I will join the heavenly choir, sing Glory Hallelujah, thank Him for being so good to me, cause that’s how I got over.” Secondly,

FATHERS AND MOTHERS, TEACH GOD’S COMMANDMENTS TO THE NEXT GENERATION, INCLUDING THOSE YET TO BE BORN. (II.) In Psalm 78: 5-6, we read, “He, that’s God, established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.” God has a plan nothing short of miraculous, as His commandments are designed to protect our homes, our families, our marriages, and our churches from the deceptive counterfeits being offered by our world system that is rushing headlong to destruction under the dominion and deception of Satan.

Though the church and millions of believers have forgotten it, the primary means of teaching our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren is the home, under the teamwork and godly influence of a godly father and mother. In a family with parents in one home, fathers, God holds you responsible for the spiritual legacy passed on to your children. In a broken home, wherever the children are living, God holds you as the father or the mother responsible for the legacy you teach your children in your home. This is far more than putting food on the table. This is far more than providing medical care for our children and getting braces on our

children's teeth. Dads and moms, husbands and wives, God holds you responsible for representing to your children a Christ-like home, as you teach and model God's Word in an atmosphere of God's love, His grace, His patience, His loving discipline, His encouragement, and His understanding. Parents and grandparents, we must be dedicated to teaching our children to know and love the Lord. If our children are following the world's system, we should not be shocked if we have been expecting Sunday School in one out of 168 hours a week, to do the job for us. No, it is in the home where life makes up its mind. Home is where children learn the power of the Gospel and how God can keep Dad and Mom on fire for Jesus, in love with each other, and keep Dad and Mom together when marriage gets tough. Home is where our children learn whether God is sufficient to still do miracles when we all surrender to Jesus. Raising our children separately where moms and dads share custody and children go back and forth is not God's primary way to pass on the Gospel of Jesus to the next generation. When a spouse abandons the home and children are left to one parent, I applaud the way some parents do what you do, doubling as both father and mother. Charles Spurgeon once said it well, "Sunday School teachers and Pastors were never meant to be substitutes for a mother's tears and a father's prayers." As a couple, we as parents working together, as no one else, are models in living color of both attitude and action as what God calls us to in passing the Gospel torch on to our children.

As we teach our children, remember this is God's testimony in Jacob, v. 5, and it is still God's appointed law in Israel and our law and commandments too. That means we must stress daily at home that God's Word is His inerrant, infallible guide and authority for all faith and life. We must teach that God's Word always takes precedence over the ideas of men and the world. Guard against elevating man's theories in psychology or philosophy above the authority of the Word. In the face of secular humanism, and this present woke generation, we must stress memorizing the Word of God, hiding it in our hearts, so we will not sin against God. Children will model not what we say, but what we do. If we prove God isn't great enough to conquer our addictions, not able to hold our marriages together, and if we live loosely and show our children God doesn't call for us to live holy lives, what we do will always trump what we say. When we fail to communicate God's truth to our children, we are guilty of hiding from them the most important information in the world. Like someone who knows where there is water, but refuses to reveal it to someone dying of thirst, our neglect is criminal. Beloved, the greatest mission of parents is teaching our children, bringing them up together, in the nurture, discipline, and admonition of the Lord. Thirdly,

FATHERS AND MOTHERS, NEVER FORGET FAITHFULNESS TO GOD, KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS AND SET YOUR HOPE IN GOD ALONE.

(III.) Psalm 78: 7-8 is so poignant. Asaph tells us, "Tell them to your children so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful

to God.” What makes us forget faithfulness to God, so we don’t set our hopes in Him, but in our own false hopes? Three words tell the story—stubborn, rebellious, and not steadfast. (1) **Stubborn** is a Hebrew word used only five times—**carar**. This word **carar** means to withdraw from God’s will, to turn away from His commandments, yielding to any sudden impulse of passion, to backslide/slide back from His testimony, stiff-necked, ungovernable, not taking any pains to have our heart right with God, to revolt against God, to refuse God’s way in disobedience, perversity and being unwilling to be welded to God’s way. (2) **Rebellious** is used 44 times—**marah**. Marah means to become bitter, contentious, motivated by pride, to defy the command of God, to refuse to be near to God, or to set our hearts to rebel against the word of the Lord. The third word, (**not steadfast**) – **aman**, is used 108 times. It means to not be willing to parent, nurse, or to bring up a child, to not be faithful, enduring, or trustworthy, to not be one who can be trusted or believed, not firmly anchored, to not be steadfast or immovable, and having no strength of attachment so as to resist temptation, so easily falling into sin and idolatry. This is a psalm about Israel’s history. The German philosopher Hegel said, “The one thing we learn from history is that we don’t learn from history. As A.T. Pierson said, “God wants our history to reflect His story.” Notice Psalm 78 as I read a few verses as you follow Israel’s history—hardening their hearts against the Lord.

How can we leave a legacy like Lillian? Asaph has told us, “If we as parents are truly godly, the chances are far greater that our children will be too. Children born with sinful natures like we all have been born with, unless they have the godly influence of their parents who are faithful to God and to each other, will most often, not grow up to be faithful to God. Godly children who know God, trust, and obey Him, are redeemed first of all by God’s grace through faith, but their growth does not come by accident. Godly children most often are the product of the legacy they see at home with us as parents or at times, from some good or godly couple or some godly mentor whom God uses. If we as parents set our hearts aright to know and walk with God, then God by His grace will begin to use us to see a godly legacy lived out in them. Will we leave a godly legacy like Lillian did? Let’s pray.